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THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

A RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND CHARLES H. BRENT, BISHOP OF THE
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

THERE is no enigma in this caption. I mean Christ, the best known and the least known of the race. Nor will any one who claims to be a Christian dispute His supremacy as the Hope of the World.

When I speak of Christ I refer to One whom I know to be living, conscious, throbbing Personality, the most modern of men, whose activities are built on the foundation of a human career converted into an eternal force, perennial, inexhaustible. Upon His leadership accepted, His counsels heeded, depends the happy transfiguration of to-day's tragedies and woes, and the salvation of the world.

From the beginning men have demanded a leader who would be strong enough to weld a variegated multitude into a unity, loving enough to compassionate the feeble and maimed, great enough to give discerning attention to each of us separately. When they could not find such a leader among their contemporaries, men searched the past and idealized the best of their ancestors. But the strongest ancestral propulsion is a poor substitute for that compelling attraction of personal sympathy which alone can lift a man above himself. So it was that humanity, disillusionized as to the transforming power of the dead past, early began to explore the abode of the unborn in a quest for the Leader who men knew must be waiting somewhere for the beckoning of loyalty. Prophecy, the articulate yearning of the heart, was the invitation which the Hope of the World was tarrying for. He came, and left on the history of His time a representative impression. Since then He has not ceased to operate according to the principles revealed in His incarnate career. In Him we have a Leader who never fails

His followers. What is lacking is followers who will never fail Him.

The triumph of human confusion which our day has achieved does not connote the failure of Christ or even of Christianity. It does connote, however, the failure of Christians. The many concentric wheels of human thought and activity are not swinging on the common pivot, Christ. The result is what it is. Let Him be put never so small a space from the center of any department of life, and jolting begins. The mechanical has been exalted above the personal, the material above the spiritual, the expedient above the true.

Christ is the Hope of the World because He is the one Leader who has in Him human personality that is sufficient in wisdom, creative force, and stability to knit the whole human to the whole divine. He is no tribal partisan. Already in His time-scarred hands He holds the threads of the misconduct of the nations and is knitting them into a remedial scourge. He has in preparation a new nationality too self-respecting for jingoism, too respectful of other nations to be quarrelsome.

A world of persons can be unified only by complete Personality. The incomparable energy of co-operative international peace cannot be bought by money, molded by machinery, or bullied into being by great armaments. Now it is because Christ, the offspring of the most persistent nation in history, is superior to nationality by being whole-man (not super-man) instead of part-man as the mere nationalist or patriot is, that He is the Hope of mankind. Others, men well skilled to speak, will treat exhaustively of the congeries of valuable agencies, mechanical and otherwise, which will make for a higher order. I would confine myself to the one central figure that alone can give full meaning and power to all the rest. In a world of men that which counts is either personal or personalized. Consequently Christianity can never be a formula. It must be preserved (or revived) as a life principle controlled from moment to moment by its author. Principles call for acceptance first, then precise application. Christianity to live must always be original in this sense of re-acceptance from the hand of Christ, and re-application from generation to generation to the ever-changing conditions that make life a puzzle and a joy.

To-day the world of Christians stands before the bar of God's judgments convicted, punished—and forgiven. Now for the to-morrows of our Nation and the world! CHARLES H. BRENT.